

## **The Right Response to a Wrong World**

(James 5:1-11)

1/20/15; Wed PM Pine Grove

### **Introduction**

It is hard at times to look at the injustice in this world...

I very rarely watch the news.

I usually get my news through the internet.

That way if I want to stop hearing about an injustice the world, I simply stop reading...

Stories of the mistreatment of children often anger me and spike my blood pressure..

But there is also other types of injustice in the news as well...

People who are clearly guilty being found innocent on the basis on a small misstep by a policeman or a lawyer.

Folks who worked hard all their lives and the have their savings accounts emptied by a fast talking salesman...

Injustice is everywhere...

The dictionary gives this simple definition of injustice...

Unfair treatment, usually between two or more people.

And simply put, our world is full of it...

Ever since sin entered the world, injustice quickly followed.

It is simply a part of a fallen world, but it still upsets us to look at it...

Now, why is that?

Well for believers, we have a new way to look at the world after we are saved.

Salvation gives us a new heart with new desires, and salvation even changes our view of the world...

We move from not taking much notice of injustice or even practicing injustice to being angered by it when we see it..

It is just part of our new nature as Christians...

God is just and we as His people desire justice as well..

Now the hard part is this...

What do we do in response to the injustice we see?

Well, like most things, there are two extreme responses to that question as a Christian....

One is too simply ignore injustice in the world...

Throw your hands up in the air move into a cabin in the middle of the woods and wait to die...

The other is to live a life trying to fix every injustice you see...

And in that extreme, you will never succeed because a fallen world will always have injustices..

So the question becomes...

What are we to do when we see a wrong in this world?

How are we to react when we see people taking advantage of others?

Is it our job to fix it or should we just ignore it?

Well, James is going to help us think through that tonight in James 5...

We have been in James on Wednesday nights ever since November and tonight we are starting the last chapter of James...

If you remember, James is writing to the very early church, and he is helping them answer a very common question...

Am I saved or not?

And for four chapters, he has put his readers through 9 tests of salvation..

The test of trials...

The test of temptation...

The test of how we view God's Word...

The test of showing favoritism...

The test of doing not just hearing God's Word..

The test of the tongue...

The test of wisdom...

The test of winning the war against our flesh..

And last week, we looked at test #9, which was a test of how a person views God's control of tomorrow..

That brings us to chapter 5:1-11, which I have called a test of how to react to injustice....

These 11 verses are most easily broken up into 2 sections...

In verse 1-6, we will see....

### I. The Example of Injustice

And then in verses 7-11, we will end with...

### II. The Call to Endurance

Let's begin by reading the first 6 verses of James 5...

## **I. The Example of Injustice (1-6)**

***5 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. 2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! 4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of [a]Sabaoth. 5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have [b]fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and [c]put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.***

As we move out of test #9 in chapter 4, James turns his attention to the rich...

Remember what the Bible says....

“Money is the root of all sorts of evil,” right?

Well, that’s not exactly what the Bible says...

1 Timothy 6:10 actually says,...

“The love of money is a root of all sorts of evil.”

Contrary to what many say, it is not a sin to be rich...

Jesus never condemned the rich; He just simply said that being rich leads to more temptation at times.

Being rich often tempts people to trust in themselves rather than trust in the Lord...

Wealth sometimes causes people to pat themselves on the back instead of praising God for His blessings.

So, there is always a trap in being rich...

But there is also a trap in being poor in that you will turn to dishonest men to get money...

Being rich is not the problem.

However it can lead to problems and it can lead to sins..

And that is the point of the first 6 verses here..

James does not have it out for the rich here.

He is using rich people who fall into sin as an example of worldly injustice...

In the first 3 verses, he describes the judgment that will come to rich and poor alike who commit unjust sins...

Verse 1 says that the rich who practice injustice will be lead to tears and misery..

Verse 2 talks about how injustice done by the rich will lead to their riches being taken away..

Verse 3 talks about how injustice done by the rich will lead to their gold rusting and their own flesh being rusted away as well...

So, what is the problem here?

What injustice done by the rich will lead to such horrible consequences?

Well, we see that in verse 4...

The first charge is that the rich had sinned by withholding the wages of their workers...

Day labor was very common in Israel, and wealthy landowners would hire men to come in and help at harvest time...

However, James says that the rich land owners had not paid the workers what was due them for their labor...

Instead, the wages were withheld.

This is a clear case of injustice.

The people worked, and they deserved to be paid their fair share for their labor..

The level of this injustice was so bad that James says the cries of the workers reached all the way to the ears of God in heaven...

Though we know that God hears everything, the point that James was making is that this withholding of a paycheck was a serious sin of injustice...

But that wasn't their only sin...

The next is seen in verse 5...

The rich had indulged themselves with their riches...

Instead of being people who blessed God and others with their prosperity, they blessed only themselves...

I love how James puts it...

They fattened themselves with their riches, but they were only getting fatter for the slaughter....

Y'all know that I worked at a restaurant in Union...

But we also had a meat market within the restaurant, where we sold every cut of pork and beef imaginable...

Steaks, hamburger, roasts, sausage.

You name it, we had it, but our best seller was thick fatback...

The man who founded the restaurant went to the markets to buy hogs and cows on foot...

And often times, he would buy the biggest hogs out there...

Ones that everyone else passed on, he bought because they would often have the thickest fatback...

And when you are selling fatback for \$4.99 lb, you don't care how good the pork chops were...

Jack often said, the worse the diet of a hog, the more more money I make...

And he was right...

The more a pig gorged himself, the better he looked for the slaughter when it came to fatback...

That is the picture of James 5:1...

Every time the rich man filled his life with more things to please him, the more he fattened himself for the slaughter of God's wrath...

And then the final sin of the rich in these opening verses is found in verse 6...

Quite simply, the injustice of the rich toward the poor ended in murder...

Whether that meant that families starved because they weren't paid their wages....

Or whether that meant that the rich actually killed others is not clear...

But the point is that the injustice practiced by the rich on the poor found its final end with the death of innocent men...

And that was the ultimate tragedy and miscarriage of justice that James was pointing out....

Not only did people not get paid....

Not only did the rich take the money that belonged to the laborers and spend it on themselves...

But the worst result of the injustice is that people died from it...

Families starved or maybe even the laborers were killed when they complained about not getting paid..

So James sets up this unjust situation for us of the rich getting richer at the expense of the poor...

Now, it needs to be said...

This is just one example of injustice in the world...

And injustice is not just carried out by the rich...

The poor and the middle class can be unjust as well...

James just simply uses this example to point out a case of clear unfairness in the world...

And so the question comes to James readers and to us...

How should we respond to that example of injustice and likewise how should we respond to other examples of injustice in the world?

Well, we are about to get our answer...

Let's move to verse 7...

## **II. The Call to Endurance (7-11)**

Let me read these verses to get us going....

***7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until [d]it gets the early and late rains. 8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Do not [e]complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing [f]right at the [g]door. 10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the [h]endurance of Job and have seen the [i]outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.***

The proper response to seeing injustice in the world has a couple parts that we will look at...

And let's be clear here...

This applies not only to injustice that you witness, it also applies to injustice that comes to you...

Many people respond to injustice in their lives like the woman who went to the basketball game for years....

She would sit there listening to other parents complain about how the coaches didn't let their children play....

And she would often say to those parents...

“That coach is a good man. I know its hard not to watch your kids play, but the coach knows what he is doing and I am sure it if for the best.”

Then her own grandson made the team.

Five minutes into his first game, her grandson never left the bench..

And she got up and began calling that coach ever name in the book...

One of the other parents calmed her down and reminded her of what she had told them years earlier with one their older kids...

She responded... “That was for our child, BUT THATS MY BABY!”

These principles that we will look at ally to the injustice across the world and the injustice that comes to your doorstep as well...

***1) The primary response is patient endurance...***

Look at verse 7....

James tells his readers and us to patiently endure injustice...

That means whether you see it from a distance or experience it in your life, you need to patiently endure it..

This is idea of long suffering...

This is not a short tempered response, but a well thought out patient response to injustice...

How long much your patience endure?

Until the Lord comes and puts an end to injustice in the world...

James then uses the illustration of the farmer who patiently waits on a crop...

But he needs the spring and the fall rains to make that crop happen...

So, he patiently waits knowing that he can't make it rain...

He simply depends on the Lord to provide what he needs in the meantime...

The same is true for us as we see injustice in the world...

What do we want?

Well, we want justice...

That is our reward, our crop if we were a farmer...

But we can't make justice...

We have to wait on the Lord to bring about justice...

IT will come to this world, but it will only come when He returns to this world..

In the meantime, we wait patiently...

Now I am going to talk about this in a minute, but that doesn't mean that we have to sit and do nothing...

The farmer fertilizes and weeds and tends his garden, and I think that allows us to speak about injustice when we see it...

But even when we speak about it, we must still understand that we can't make it right until the Lord establishes perfect justice in this world...

James then repeats his command to us in verse 8...

Be patient, strengthen your hearts...

The point is to stand firm and remain faithful to the Lord despite what you see...

Many people lose hope when they see the injustice around them...

The begin to figure what's the use, and their faith in God wavers...

James reminds us to not be like that...

Chin up. Justice will come. Trust in the Lord.  
Strengthen your heart..

The Lord is near.

My parents when I was young, and I lived with my dad after the divorce...

He would often leave me with my grandparents when he had to go somewhere on Friday or Saturday night...

I didn't like it all, but he would always tell me that he was coming back to get me..

I would cry when he left, and couldn't wait for him to get home..

My grandmother would often tell me...

Just go lay down and we will get you up when he comes home...

But I didn't want any part of that...

I always said no.

I am waiting right here until he gets back...

Sometimes, I would make it past midnight waiting on Him...

That is the kind of steadfastness we must have as believers...

Yes, we see the injustice in the world...

Yes, we even experience the injustice of the world...

But no, we aren't giving in or giving up on justice...

Jesus said he was going to return, and He said He would right every wrong...

And we believe Him.

So we strengthen our hearts and our faith as we look forward to His return..

Therefore, #1 we patiently endure injustice when we see it or experience it ourselves...

***#2- We respond without bitter complaint.***

Though we may like to forget this...

Complaining and grumbling are sins..

Phil 2:14-15...

***14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing;  
15 so that you will [i]prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you [j]appear as [k]lights in the world,***

Notice two things about this verse...

#1 - Grumbling, complaining are sins period.

One of the reason that Israel that kept out of the promised land wandering in the desert for 40 years was that they complained against God...

But notice #2...

#2 - A person who doesn't complain is so rare that they a light in a dark world...

Seeing injustice and experiencing injustice makes us complainers and grumblers...

If you think about news shows and newspaper editorials, the purpose of most of them is to make the world aware of injustice...

Most of the highest rated news shows are led by men and women who get paid millions of dollars to complain about our world..

Though they may offer solutions at times, the basis of most of their shows is a complaint about the world...

And people eat it up...

In fact, they often join in with the complainers as well...

As believers, our testimony suffers we when join in the chorus of grumblers in the world...

Why in the world should we grumble as Christians...

If anyone understands that the world is broken, it should be us...

We know why injustice exists....

Because the world is filled with sin and sinful people...

We shouldn't be known for complaining about all the world's problems....

We should be offering the only solution...

The gospel of Jesus Christ...

Yet, how many Christians do we see today that only join in the complaining...??

Let me tell you something that sums up the state of this world...

It is unjust and life is unfair.

However, our goal in life is not to point out and complain about every sin we see...

Our goal is to point others to the solution for sin, the Lord Jesus Christ...

If people shared the gospel as often as they complained about how bad things were, the world would be much different...

Here is the truth that we all need to be reminded of...

Even if we put a stop to some of the injustice we see in this world, we will never change the fact that people need to hear the gospel to be saved...

Complaining about injustice does not attract people to Christ, but quiet confidence in the Lord to right the wrongs of this world surely does...

Let us not be grumblers and complainers...

Let us be good news bearers...

And James reminds us of an important truth at the end of verse 9....

The Judge stands at the door...

He is the One who will fix the injustice....

We just simply need to point others to Him...

He is the solution to all of our complaints about the world...

He is the focus of all of human history.

He will come to put an end to injustice.

Our job is not to do His job...

He will fix it;

Our job is to make sure that people hear the name of Christ and not our complaints...

And then James ends this section with a final principle to guide our reactions to injustice...

I simply label this principle...

### ***#3 - Respond like the prophets and Job.***

How do we respond to injustice that we see and experience...

First, we need to respond like the prophets of the OT...

Now, the prophets were simply the preachers of the OT...

God would see the injustice and sin in Israel and in other nations and he would send his prophets to preach to them...

I think this is a good balance for us here...

In no way should you see James 5 as teaching that we should just do nothing in response to injustice...

It is certainly fine to offer a Christian response to injustice..

As the Lord allows, it is fine to call out the injustice in our world...

Abortion is murder....

Taking advantage of the poor is sin...

Seeing guilty men go free is injustice...

We need to call sin what it is...

And since our governmental system allows us to vote...

We should vote for people who stand for biblical justice...

James is not calling us to turn a blind eye to problems in the world..

The prophets spoke up, but they never took matters into their own hands but simply allowed God to use His word to change people...

Abortion is wrong, but I can't stop it by killing the doctors who perform it...

I can vote for candidates who vow to put a stop to it through legislation...

I can tell people who are considering abortion not to do it.

But in the end, the injustice of abortion lies in the hands of God...

Along with all the other injustices in the world...

The prophets understood that too...

They preached and told the people the truth, but they understood that only God could change people and end injustice.

That is a great example for us...

Share the truth with people.

Do what the Lord allows when it comes to ending injustice....

But ultimately understands that injustice will not end until the Lord ends it...

James then ends with a reference to Job.

Now, Job was a great example of someone who suffered personal injustice...

He lost his wealth, his children, and his health through no fault of his own...

Talk about injustice!

Yet, what was Job's response to injustice?

If you look at the principles that we have talked about tonight...

You will see that Job practiced everyone one of them...

First, he patiently endured...

HE was long suffering and not short tempered...

Second, Job never complained...

He accepted the injustice but never blamed God for it...

Job said,

“God has given and God has taken away, Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

And finally #3, Job spoke truth but never tried to right the injustice that came to him...

He told his friends that he had done nothing to deserve what came to him...

He told his friends that God was fair in all the decisions He makes...

We would do well to model Job in our lives....

When injustice comes to you, be a Job...

Patiently endure...

Refuse to complain...

And speak truth lovingly.

Let's end tonight looking at the final part of James 5:11...

James ends up his teaching on how to react to injustice by pointing our minds to the end of Job's life..

Many people forget how Job's life ended because they are so focused on how bad Job's life went..

But if you go to the end of Job...

Job 42....

This is what you read in verses 10-17...

***10 The Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the Lord increased all that Job had twofold. 11 Then all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversities that the Lord had brought on him. And each one gave him one [c]piece of money, and each a ring of gold. 12 The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had 14,000 sheep and 6,000 camels and 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys. 13 He had seven sons and three daughters. 14 He named the first Jemimah, and the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. 15 In all the land no women were found so fair as Job's daughters; and their father gave them inheritance among their brothers. 16 After this, Job lived 140 years, and***

*saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations.  
17 And Job died, an old man and full of days.*

What are to learn from that?

Personal injustice in this life does not go unnoticed by the Lord...

And when we are people who patiently endure injustice whether we see it in the world or whether we experience it personally....

And when we are people who refuse to complain about injustice...

And when we are people who speak the truth of injustice but leave the results to God...

When we are people like that, we should expect to see a day where God rewards us for that attitude...

Job had experienced the worst injustice, but in the end, God righted the wrong and rewarded Job with more than he ever had...

The same should be true of us...

We live in unjust world...

We even experience injustice in our lives...

But for the one who responds biblically to it, there will come a day when you never see injustice again...

And you never are treated unjustly yourselves...

The promise of that day should motivate us today to respond to injustice in a way that honors the Lord.

## **Conclusion**

Let's end tonight by studying injustice in the life of Jesus....

The prophets are a good model....

Job is a good model...

But let's end by looking at the example of Christ...

Two things to see...

#1 - Jesus never bit his tongue when it came to injustice in the world...

He told the religious leaders of Judaism that their religion was corrupt..

He told them that their religion was based on greed..

He even went into the temple and threw out the money changers and salesmen...

But never think that Jesus didn't patiently endure suffering and leave the rest up to God....

Because #2 - Jesus was the ultimate example of patient endurance...

Remember when he was on the cross...

Now think about it...

This is the ultimate example of injustice...

And innocent man is about to die like a guilty criminal...

Even in the face of such injustice, Jesus didn't call down angels to kill his executioners...

Instead He asked God to forgive for they know not what they do...

Jesus patiently endured with no complain because he knew that He would have the final say on injustice..

And he will when all of his enemies stand before the Great White Throne to receive their just sentence...

WE need to patiently endure injustice because the prophets did, and because Job did....

But most importantly because our Lord did...

Let us pray...